

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1869.

Subject : Bearing, but not Overborne.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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BEARING, BUT NOT OVERBORNE.

"And he, bearing his cross, went forth."—JOHN XIX., 17.

Any one, repairing to an art store, who should inquire for classic engravings, would be shown a line of what are called *the masters in engraving*—Durer, Raimondi, Beires, Muller, and others. But if he should inquire for sacred subjects, rather than for engravings as such, he would have presented to him almost every scene in the life of Jesus which could be rendered pictorially. But above all, he would find a harvest of the speciality of suffering. In the mediæval religions, there was no other single feature that entered so disproportionately into the representations which were made of Christ, as the element of suffering. His victory, in the thought of those periods, was to be looked for in heaven; or on earth at the close of his life; but during the passage of his life sorrow upon sorrow.

Not only so, the line between the brief endurance and the enfeeblement was not well understood nor distinctly marked, by the mediæval Christian artist. To excite pity, and, through that sentiment, unbounded devotion, the Savior was represented in the most heart-rending experiences; and as it was far easier to study the effect of suffering from human subjects than to imagine how it would be borne by a divine soul in a human body, we see the weakness of human suffering in the thousands of pictures which discuss the divine suffering. The whole history of the trial and crucifixion, as the culmination of the suffering of Jesus, have been reproduced upon canvass until art has exhausted all possible variations.

A favorite point, as it might well have been expected, has been the going forth of Jesus bearing his cross. He had passed the awful midnight of Gethsemane; his arrest there; his indecent carriage to the city. The residue of the night was spent before the Jewish council, which had been convened, and were sitting up, waiting in expectancy of Judas' success. The excitement of his trial prevailed through all

the succeeding day, before the Roman tribunal. All day and all night again he was tossed about like a flower rocked in a whirling wind. And then, the next forenoon, in his famished, over-wearied state, he was led forth. And he went forth bearing the cross.

Early art, seizing this point of time, represents Christ as erect, and even triumphant, carrying the cross as if he felt a renewal of power at its touch; but later art and artists—Domenichino, and Raphael, and others less spiritual, more sensuous, have shown us Christ bending under his cross, sometimes stumbled upon the knee, or the knee and the hand, and even lying at full length upon the ground, overborne by the cross, and outwardly conquered.

But is there anything to justify such a rendering as that? Mathew, Mark and Luke do not even mention that Christ bore his own cross at all. We should never have known that fact but for John. He simply mentions it, saying of it only as much as is in our text.

The movement began, it seems, from the judgment seat. The cross was laid upon him, and he went forth bearing it. Doubtless his step was so hindered that it was slow. But they were in hot haste to expedite the movement. They seized upon Simon, a Cyrenian, who chanced to be present, probably because he was a swart and burly fellow, and made him a porter, that Jesus, relieved of the load, might move with greater celerity. They were anxious for his blood.

Is it of any importance how art represents this scene? Yes. A picture once seen gives meaning to the Scripture, to all unreflective minds, ever after. Sacred art may be called the evangelist of the senses.

Consider the moral influence of the two different modes of pictorially representing Christ.

The earlier and more noble and genuine painters represented him, as I have said, erect, and almost triumphant, and moving with his cross upon his shoulder as if he had already triumphed over it. It is the cross upborne by the divine energy, and carried joyfully, as if to illustrate the apostles description—"Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Such language indicates loftiness, treading under foot, as a thing contemptible, and not worthy of notice, the shame, and suffering, and burden.

But theology lost the inexpressible sweetness of the evangelist—the simplicity which seems to have been the reflex of Christ's influence upon his own times in the Gospel. It became ascetic in the mediæval age. The Roman—that is, the Tuscan—gloom, spread through theology, and the sufferings of Christ began to fill the whole horizon. And now art began to fall unconsciously from Christ's divinity to the exhibition of that weakness which belonged to his body. His face lost serenity,

and became woe-struck. His form no longer elate became bent and prostrate, as if some mighty oak, uprooted by the gale, had fallen its full length along the ground. It was Christ, in later art, overborne, subdued, carried captive by trouble. True art represents Christ as *bearing his cross*. Later art represents Christ as *overborne by his cross*. There is a great deal of difference in these two ideas, whether in picture, or in moral influence.

In following the scriptural history, nothing is more striking than the air of assured victory which Christ carried with him even to the end. It is true that there were conflicts; but it is to be remarked that the conflicts under which Christ bowed down were hidden. They were conflicts of the soul along the line which separates the finite and the infinite. They were sufferings whose relations were not understood, and are not understood, but which "entered into that within the veil." They were of God, and to God.

But the outward life of Christ was everywhere one of calm triumph. Human life, and all its incidents, he met bravely, cheerfully, serenely. It is of transcendent interest to us to know, not that divine love bore its earthly lot, weakly, and mourningly, and overborne, but that divine love enfleshed, and moving among men, was strong, that it had amplitude of willingness for the tasks that were incumbent upon it, and that it triumphed not merely at last, but all the way through life.

In short, in this glimpse which John gives us, and which we get, of the turbulent termination of Christ's shameful trial, what do we see? The Roman magistrate, conscious of having done an unjust thing, slinking back to his palace; the priests and rulers, in furious ecstasy congratulating each other, and hurrying forward the events; and the excited populace, fierce and truculent, roaring along the crowded street. Only one sweet and peaceful thing stands out on this lurid background. It is Christ himself. "And he," John says, "bearing his cross, went forth."

The whole world lay heavy upon that cross; but he bore it. Our sins and our troubles loaded the cross; but he bore it aloft. It was heavier than man may know; but love was stronger than all its weight. And this glimpse is the true epitome of Christ's life on earth, under every variation of experience, carrying himself in all the moods of a triumphant love.

I. Christ himself, first, and the apostles abundantly afterwards, employed the figure of the cross as the sign of moral struggle. It is a symbol of self-denial—of daily self-negation. If any man supposes that this world was made perfect in the sense that there was nothing more to be done—in the sense that it was a finished world, instead of a world always finishing itself; if anybody supposes that God created

man perfect in the sense that he would not be ages coming to himself, then he has mistaken both nature and scripture. The world was made on the idea of unfolding and growing—on the seed idea. As our Savior said, the kingdom of God is like a seed, which is so small that it scarcely can be seen, but which, when full grown, is so large that it is a refuge and covert to the birds and beasts. If any man has well considered this teaching of Christ, he must know that this world is a world where men are *coming* to themselves, and not where they have come to themselves. And in coming to ourselves, we begin low down—in the senses. We open from the senses, up into the social nature. And we go on through the social nature, up into the moral and spiritual nature. And that which opens first is strongest, and has the most influence. And we nourish it. The body and the senses carry the first power, and the most power. It is only by many tears and hard stripes that many learn to make the second stage, which is the development of the affections, the first stage being the natural development of the flesh and the body. And by still harder struggles and trials do men learn that there are feelings and tendencies in the nature that God has given us which are to be supreme over the affections and the senses. This is not revealed all at once. We *learn* to make domestic love stronger than our appetites; and we *learn* to make spiritual nobilities stronger than our affections, or passions, or selfish interests.

There is always at the point of learning a despot that does not want to be dethroned. When the child, a little animal, greedily seeking to eat, drink and warm itself, comes under the care of the parent, and is taught that it must not feed itself at the expense of its little brother, it is learning love. The parent says, "You must be generous, my child. Why! will not let poor little brother have anything?" and his great big stomach says, "No! I want it all myself." And the dormant tendency toward generosity and the social affections is to be stimulated and encouraged until the child learns that love is to be more generous, and that it is to be praised if it overcomes its own little sensuous instincts, and becomes kind, and so sacrifices itself. And by the time the child is six years old, he is ashamed to have the mother's eye turn upon him with rebuke, and say, "What! took that away from the little baby?" A little child six years old is just as much a pope as the pope in Rome; or just as much a despot as an emperor on his throne; and it is only the grace of God that uncrowns and dethrones us. Selfishness makes a man a despot, whether he be in the shop, or on the ship, or on the shore, or anywhere else. We all have selfishness and self-seeking; and we all learn to put them down in our bodily nature by the force of pure affection.

Father and mother stand in the place of God to the child, to teach

him how to take the feelings next above the lowest, and make the lowest mind them; and whenever the lower feelings have to mind the higher, there is the taking up of the cross. You take up the cross when you crucify your lower feelings, and make them give up, and bow down to your higher feelings.

And that which takes place in the nursery and in the household, goes on still higher. There come spiritual intuitions and spiritual nobilities dawning on the mind. And we have to go all the way through our life learning to make our lowest nature mind the next higher; and this the next higher, and so on, reducing them to control, so that the private shall be a private, and the lieutenant shall be a lieutenant, and the colonel shall be a colonel, and the general shall be a general, and God shall be Captain over all.

Human life is a perpetual series of developments; and every step of development is a development by which the natural passions roll unobstructed, and are omnipotent over everything that is good; or else it is a development by which we become good. And if we become good, we do it by a process of perpetual self-negation—that is, by refusing a lower range of faculties, and giving power to the next higher, from the lowest to the very top.

Listen to Christ: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily* and follow me."

You do not follow Christ when you run after his name. You do follow Christ when you run after his example, his spirit, his nature. It is not a duty which you impose upon yourselves, as it were from the outside. In the nature of things, no man can follow the true spiritual Christ except by that very process by which he puts down the lower nature, not extinguishing it, but regulating it, and subordinating it by the superior claims and power of the higher.

There are wide variations of experience in this work. All crosses are not alike to all. If a man's pride is eminent, that which breaks it will be a severe cross to him; but if a man is not naturally strong in his self-esteem, then that same conjunction of circumstances or duty will not be a cross to him. Therefore crosses do not come to us in the same places. If a man's ear is as acute as Mozart's, and he sits patiently in meeting, and hears gross discords and hideous screechings all about him, and his ear suffers, and he says to himself, "My brethren here are doing as well as they can, and for their sake I will bear it," he is taking up his cross. The cross is laid upon his musical ear. But suppose a man says, "I do not know Yankee Doodle from Old Hundred; but still, I take up my cross and bear it?" He does not hear anything that hurts him. When the miser is called to face the contribution-box, and all the neighbors are looking at him, and he has to deny himself, and

he puts in his contribution, saying, inside, tearfully, "Good bye," it is a self-denial to him. But it is not a self-denial to a benevolent man, sitting by his side, who only regrets that he has so little to give, and says to himself, "If I had known that there was to be a contribution to-day I would not have changed my clothes!" The act is the same; but to one it is a self-denial, while to the other it is not, according to the stage in the battle between their lower and their higher nature. Self-denial comes in different spots in different persons. A thing which, when it happens to you, is hard to be borne, when it happens to your neighbor costs him no trial at all.

And yet, the best men, men in the most favorable places, the best educated men, and men that are surrounded by the most concordant influences, cannot escape. There is a cross for every living man.

Nay, the great fact of trouble is neither a mystery nor an evil in any sense that makes it disorganizing. Men wonder at the origin of evil. I know where its origin was. It originated with God. You might as well look at a steam engine, and say, "What could have been the origin of this vast machine?" Why the engineer's brain was. If God had meant men to be polished and varnished, like the vase for the shelf, he would have made them so. But he did not make them so. He made them in germs and seed-forms, and said to them, "Grow!" And growing is labor-pain; and you cannot get rid of it. It is a part of the condition of organized creation, that the work of going from a lower to a higher state is like a new-birth, with cries and pains both ways, to those that help, and those that are born. And every man on earth who lives in the spirit of God, and in accordance with the economy of God's grace, by which he is to shoot up from lower forms to higher ones, must have troubles, multiform, special and peculiar to himself.

To attempt, then, to shape our plans so as to be rid of trouble, and not to meet it, is all vain. If you go aside from one path where it seems to loom to another, you shall find that it is there before you. There is no such thing as living in this world except in one or two ways. If a man says, "Time and Sense, ye are my gods; I give my life to you; let me eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow I die," then he may get along with comparatively little trouble, because he is not attempting to grow; because he is going the other way all the time. But, on the other hand, if a man attempts to grow wiser, and purer and more manly; and more noble, let him make up his mind that he has got to pay for these qualities.

Is the servant better than the Master? When Christ took man's natural lot, and threw about himself the garments of the flesh, and became subject to time, and place, and civil government, and society, it was not possible for him to develop through childhood to man-

hood—through the appointed term of his life—without undergoing struggle and trial and cross-bearing. And in the midst of these experiences he turns, and looks, and says, “I bear the cross. Are you any better than I am? If a man does not take up the cross and follow me, he is not worthy of me.” He is not worthy of himself; and still less is he worthy of his great Prototype.

We are not to seek for trouble and pain as ascetics do. God uses suffering as a whetstone, to make men sharp with. After you have made your knife sharp, your whetstone has served the purpose for which it was intended. But the ascetics seemed to think that if the whetstone was good to make a man sharp, it was good to eat. And so they kept whetting till they ground off not only the edge, but the body of the blade.

Trouble, self-denial, pain, bring a man up to a certain point; and then their mission is ended. They have no vocation of benefit after that. Up to that point a man should not seek to avoid them, or evade them. Therefore, a man that lays out his plan of life, saying, “I seek here fortune; I mean to have good health and good wealth; I mean to have everything that is happy and pleasant and sweet; I mean to live so that after a little while I need not have the cares and burdens and trials of business; I am going to have a good time in this world”—a man that does that sets out to bastardize himself! I say it on the authority of God. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every one whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards.” Now, I should not have dared to say that; but the Bible has a plain way of talking. There are men who have got their wealth, and have built their houses, and enshrined themselves in men's praise, their very houses seeming to pour out its colors, and say, “Have you seen him who lives in here?” And common men looking upon the door-plate, read the names—I will not spell the letters; but God, looking on these same door-plates, reads, “Bastards!” And there is a great brotherhood of them. He that reads by the outward eye, does not see half that is written in this world. The spirit reads one thing, and the flesh another.

That man who seeks to get rid of care, and live easy, and throw off all burdens, and have a good time to-day, without regard to to-morrow; that man who has no foresight, and no hindsight either, in his aim; that man who has no glorious manhood that he looks forward to; that man whose life is not beyond the river at all, but is all this side, “in green pastures,” and “beside the still waters”—that man God has given his name, and he does not need any other baptism!

We are born to trouble. Trouble is God's schoolmaster in this world. They that undertake to play truant will be caught, if God loves them; and if he does not love them they will be blockheads and idiots, and come to eternal disgrace by and by!

Manhood is the most precious fruit of trouble. There is but one tree in this world that bears true, full manhood. You cannot go and take any tree and plant it at hazards, and get spitzenbergs from it. If you want spitzenbergs, you must plant a tree that will bear spitzenbergs; and if you want russets, you must plant a tree that bears russets. There is one tree, and only one, that bears true manhood; and if you want true manhood, you must have that tree. And that tree is *trouble*.

II. It is not enough that men should accept this badge of their Master. It is not enough that men should say, "I accept the cross; Christ bore it, and I will bear it." More than simply *bearing* the cross is necessary. As I intimated at the opening of this discourse, the *manner* of bearing it is almost as important as the fact of bearing it. Christ did not bear his cross crouchingly. He did not bow down and prostrate himself to the ground, giving us the sign or picture of utter weakness overcome. Christ went forth *bearing* his cross—not dragging it. And we are to *bear* our crosses. We are to bear them in such a way that men, looking upon us, shall have something to admire, and something to imitate. It is piteous to see what work men make bearing their crosses.

There are those that are instructed in the necessity of cross-bearing, who, that they may not be without a cross, make up little crosses, and are careful that they are made not only small, but of light timber. Their crosses are the hermit's shell, like the old pilgrim's scollop, which was worn on the shoulder.

There are many persons who bear the cross, by taking something that is heavy to other people, but is not heavy to them. And they make much account of it, and speak often of it, and have a repute for bearing the cross, and finally persuade themselves that they are really doing it. Why, there are men who live in the indulgence of every single want and every single taste; who are so amply provided with bounties that they have more than heart can wish; and who yet, feeling that they must bear the cross, select something that is a cross to somebody else, and bear it with affectation and ostentation. They carry a kind or fictitious cross, hoping that thereby they will win the promise. But my brethren, the cross which you bear must be a real cross, and not a made-up one. A make-believe cross will not help anybody.

There are crosses which are deceitfully borne. There are many persons who meet troubles and cares in a shirking way. They have, if I

may so say, the art of padding the shoulders, so that when the cross is laid upon them it looks as though it entered in and girded them, though the shoulders having been cotton-wooled, it does not hurt them at all. They bear a cross which is not very heavy; but they have embellished it, and wound it round and round, so that it does not hurt. There are troubles which people should experience, but which they so handle without any moral benefit, that though they seem to other people to be troubles, after all when you come to look at them you find that the cross has been dealt deceitfully with.

Oh! the insincerity of people! If men were as insincere to their neighbors as they are to themselves, society would dissolve in uproar in twenty-four hours. If parents and children told lies to each other as everybody tells lies to himself; if there were foisted up before our minds as many false images outwardly as are presented to it inwardly, we could not stand it. It is not possible for any man to form a conception of the self-deceptions which we practice upon ourselves. And no deception is more frequent than that by which we persuade ourselves that on the whole our lot is one of the hardest that ever was. Everybody wants people to think that his troubles are worse than anybody else's. Men's troubles—oh! they are peculiar! I never had anybody come to me with his troubles that he did not think they were peculiar. You know that *peculiar* means *personal*. The old saying in respect to a boil, is strikingly true in respect to all mental troubles. There is but one place where a man can bear a boil, and that is on his neighbor! The only place where a man can bear suffering is on somebody else. The love of that deceitfulness by which men make themselves appear to be sufferers and cross-bearers, is endless. The false representations on this subject in the sight of God, and in the eye of his law, are without number.

Many crosses there are which are dodged, or jumped. Men will not do anything which crosses the grain of their inclination. They are good, kind, obliging, generous when things run with their worldly interests and their caprices; but they are unwilling to hold back a real strong wish of their own, for the sake of a higher good to themselves, or a benefaction to other men. There are many men that are not Christians who have a good reputation, who are very popular, who are very genial and good natured, and who in the neighborhood and in the household are more acceptable, and are better to live with, than many Christians who are a hundred times better than they are. Why, some of the hardest people in the world to live with are Christians, and *real* Christians. Many Christians who are making a greater effort in the sight of God for the future beauty of manliness than we are, we do not like, and cannot get along with. On the other hand, there are many

persons who, so long as things run with their nature, are so kind and genial and gentle that we say, "There is no need of their being born again;" and yet, the moment you come to a point where anything runs across their actual tendency, they revolt and rebound from the idea of sacrificing themselves. There is nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven, to a self-esteeming nature, so precious as self; and whatever will build up, whatever will augment, whatever will ennoble, self, in their esteem, they cannot give up. Yet, nobody can take up his cross without giving up self. And so, when crosses come men fall back upon their average good nature, and upon their reputation; and, though they touch the cross, they refuse to take it up and carry it.

We take up our crosses, frequently, not for a life, but for an hour; and yet our crosses should be to us like the armor of the ancient warrior, that was worn all the time in the presence of the enemy, or like clothing in modern society, that is forever upon us. We ought to carry our crosses till we are accustomed to them. Now we deal with our troubles (to change the name) by fits and starts. When the moral feelings swell in us, we have a "time," as the saying is, with some great grief or self-denial; but it is only for the hour, or for the day; it is for the Sunday, or the communion Sunday; it is for certain conjunctions of time, or days of remembrance. To take up a great trouble deliberately, and feel that it is heavy, and that it hurts, and feel a revulsion from it, and feel that you take it up because in this way you follow Christ, and bless your fellow men, and deliver yourself from the thrall and bondage of selfishness and pride—to take up a great trouble thus, and carry it every day, and all the time, is a very different thing.

We do not need to wait till we die before we see hell. I see persons in hell every day.

A great and pure and imaginative woman wakes out of the auroral dream of life to find that she is affianced to a brute beast, and that the things which she is the most sensitive to, are to him matters of rude vulgarity. She, yearning, spiritual, super-sensuous, lives for that which is essentially of God, and finds herself chained, night and day to a swinish creature, that eats with eructating abundance, and drinks, and snores. And she is his servant—his *familiar* servant—ransacked and runnaged, everything desecrated, as if the swine had entered the house of God, and were running wild over the altar and the most sacred places. And to live so to-day and to-morrow; and to see her children, as they come up, perverted—all that is within her resents it. And yet, she is able to say, "Lord Jesus, it is thy will, and I take up this cross, and I will carry it, if it be thy will, all my life long. I will neither run from it, nor evade it, nor lay it down, if thou wilt only give me strength." God's angels camp round about such an one. God's heaven

above, if you could only see them, is full of radiant companions. Denied at the table, denied at the couch, denied in the realm of friendship, everything that her soul hungers for, God's bounty is but just above her head, and God's own sympathy is her's, and all God's angels in the air are waiting for her. She bears the cross, and continues to bear it. God's saints are not always those of the calendar. They are often those of the household.

Nor is it necessary that we should be ostentatious in our cross-bearing. There are many persons who consent to barter the matter. They will bear the cross provided they receive recognition and applause. This is what I should call *ostentatious* cross-bearing. As long as you can have friends to come in and say, every day, "Your lot is a very hard one; I wonder how you can bear it," you feel that it is worth one's while to have a cross to bear, for the sake of the sympathy and praise that it brings. And many persons, if you praise them enough, and all the time, saying, "Why, you do go a great way every Sunday, and you are deserving of very great credit for sitting down with those miserable, unwashed, unkempt, ruffian children, and running the risk of taking the itch and the small-pox, and I know not what. If I did it I should think I was a saint"—a very polite way of telling them that you think them to be saints! As long as persons can be praised in that way, and as long as they seem to have the crown of sonship while doing this dirty work, they may perhaps do it. But suppose nobody saw you, would you do it then? Suppose people did not believe it of you, when others told it? Nay, suppose they misconstrued it? Nay, suppose you found that injurious stories were circulated about you in respect to that work into which you were putting all your strength? Nay, suppose you found yourself buffeted and reviled? Do you think you would not revile again, and that you would say, "Lord Jesus, only be thou true to me, and I care not what all the world do. I will follow thee, and I will take up my cross, and count my life not dear to me. And I will do it for the sake of those who are outcast and who need me. As thou hast been a Savior to me, so I will be a savior to them?" Nay, can you go night after night to Christ, and say, "Lord, how can I enough thank thee for permitting me to do it? Where is my word of praise, that I am accounted worthy, not only to be called by thy name, but to suffer for thy sake?"

There are many persons who, having their cross put upon them, and not being at liberty to choose whether they will take it or not, drag it upon the ground. How many persons there are that go groaning, and grumbling, and repining, because they cannot get away from certain things!

I never feel the south wind, that I do not smell flowers. I never

feel the northeast wind that I do not smell storms. There are some who are gardenesque to me ; and there are others that remind me of winds that blow across New Foundland, and bring fogs, dreary and dismal. They live in a perpetual cold sizzle of disappointment, disagreeable and complaining. Oh no ! they do not mean to give up ; they will not lay aside their cross ; but alas ! they are bearing that hated cross right through the mud, along the thoroughfare. The cross is a clog to them.

When I see animals with a clog tied to their fore leg, I know that they jump fences ; and when I see Christians dragging a clog, I know that it is a hinderance put on them to keep them within bounds. And when I go and look at it, I find that it is the cross of Christ, which they have thrown to the ground, and which is soiled by being dragged in the mud. It is a hated thing to them, and they cannot get away from it. If they could they would gnaw off or cut the thong ; but as they cannot, they still continue to drag it.

The Old Testament speaks of the bullock's being unaccustomed to the yoke, and resenting it. Christ takes the other side of the figure, and says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," "for my yoke is easy." When the bullock gets accustomed to the yoke, his neck is tough, and he does not feel it ; and that yoke which was such an annoyance, and was so hard to bear, becomes perfectly easy to the neck. And that load which at first he flew from, after he is used to drawing loads is nothing at all to him. So that, not only is the *yoke easy*, but the *burden is light*. And men, when they are cross-yoked, as it were, if they refuse the yoke, and are recreant, take it by the hardest ; but if they submit to it, and from day to day wear it, it becomes, like the yoke to which the bullock is accustomed, an easy, and not a troublesome thing.

There are many persons (and this brings us back to the illustration with which we opened the subject) who are crushed by their cross. I was looking, last week, at some pictorial illustrations of the life of Christ, and I was shocked at one in which he had fallen down his whole length upon the ground. The cross was bearing down upon him, and he was looking up with an expression which I do not care to describe. I felt the disgrace and ignominy of such a representation. That was not my Christ. My Christ was never crushed by his cross. He went forth *bearing* it. And although his disciples, when the cross is laid upon them, may for the moment find that it bends them down, yet he that has the cross lying on him long enough, will get such stimulus and strength that he will straighten himself up. And every true cross bearer learns to carry his cross as if it was an ornament, rather than a burden, and finds, after a time, that it carries him. It gives more strength to him than he gives to it.

And yet, how many persons there are who scarcely attempt to carry the cross. It is thrown on them, and they sink down under it. And that they, when Christ comes to them to comfort them, should not be comforted, and that years should pass over their heads, and they should still be crushed, and overborne, is strange and culpable. What is there in this world that is worthy of such a sacrifice of manhood—especially in them that are called by such a Savior, and such a luminous example, and that have round about them so many stimulating influences? Shall grief be forever a tyrant? Shall sorrow forever usurp the attributes of the Almighty, and stand domineering over men as if the name of God were Sorrow? I marvel that there are not more victories. I marvel that there is not more glorying over the cross. I marvel that there are not more songs of victory sung. For there is no joy greater than that of grief overcome. Nothing is more joyous in this world than the song of one who has risen from a lower to a higher plane.

I saw this summer, what I have seen almost every summer, the door of a canary's cage left open; and out shot the canary. He knew, as many men do not, that it was better to live out of a cage than in one! Every now and then I heard him, all about the house, descanting on his liberty. There were snatches here and there, and warblings yonder. He preferred to have one week's liberty and then die, rather than have a whole summer in a cage—to the shame of that philosophy which used to teach that slaves ought to be content in slavery. Though the people in the house said of the escaped bird, "Where will the poor thing get his food?"—sure enough, he had never learned to provide himself with food; although they said, "Where will he shelter himself in the pelting rain?"—sure enough, he had never learned how to do that; yet the bird gloried in his liberty. Though he was exposed to dangers from which he was protected before; though his freedom would doubtless bring him to the cat's paw, or some form of death, yet he rejoiced. And I said, I would rather have a canary bird in a tree one single day, and the singing of that day, than to have a canary bird singing in a cage a whole year, because he could not help himself; because he had nothing else to do; because he had no life of conflict; because he was fed and watered, and had nothing to do but to get into a tub of water in the morning and wash himself, and get out again, and eat, and sing, and get in again, and wash again, and get out again, and eat, and sing all day, and all night if the light be burning, and hop up, first on one round, and then on another.

There are hundreds of people—grown men and women—who are trying to be poor, miserable, circumscribed birds in a cage, with nothing to do but hop about, and sing, and eat, and sing, and eat, and by and by die and go to glory. They will die, and go out like a puff-ball, rather!

The Master, who is the grand type of manhood—God in the flesh; God clothed in the person of Jesus Christ—represents to man true manhood; and if there be one thing true, it is this: that he never flinched from trouble. And when it came upon him, he did by it what the ocean does by storms—drank them up. All troubles seemed to sink into the vastness of his being. He bore our sorrows and our sins. They were a part of his cross. Multifarious, ever-changing, and forever continuing, the cross rested upon his heart as well as upon his person; and he bore it, and bore it to the end. And he turns and says to us, “Because I live, ye shall live. I have overcome; ye shall overcome. Take up your cross daily, and follow me.”

Christian brethren, if we are puffed up and conceited; if we have been deceiving ourselves in regard to the virtues which we possess, how such a line of thought as this ought to search us out like an officer, and bring us from our hiding places! How we ought to take a higher conception of manhood! How we ought to assume a nobler attitude, and say to sickness, “I am stronger than thou art;” and to bankruptcy and revolution of fortune, “I am stronger than you are!” If misconception comes, and armed foes are drawn like bows to send venomous arrows at your heart, say, “He bore it, and I can bear it; he was reviled, and I can endure being reviled.” Say to the heaven, “Thou hast not, in all thy circuit, any missiles which if Christ be with me I cannot bear.” Say to the earth, “There is not in all thy treasures any mischief that I cannot bear if only Christ be with me. I can do all things, Christ strengthening me.”

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

We bring to thee these dear children, thou who art a Father, who hast breathed the paternal feeling into us, and who hast taught us to be children toward thee. We bring them with faith in thy love and care. When thou lovest us, thou lovest all that concerns us. When thou didst take us into thine own care and keeping, thou didst take our whole estate. The earth is thine, and all that belongs to it. The range of time, the economics of life, and all the influences that bear upon us, are thine. We, and our households, and all that relate to them, are dear to thee. And we come because we believe that thou dost love our little ones, and that thou wilt take them, in thy fatherly providence, and care for them.

And may those that thus have been brought into the house of the Lord, and into the midst of our brethren, become dear to us. Though we may not know them, may our prayers find them out. From day to day may we pray for one another. And as we pray for our own children, let us not forget, we beseech of thee, the children of those who are united with us in church fellowship. We beseech of thee that they may grow up in honor, and truth, and fidelity, and true devotion, and fervent piety; that they may be Christ's from the morning of their lives. Spare the lives of these little ones. Grant that they may grow up to be a comfort and a joy, and repay a thousand fold every tear and every care which is expended for them.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that all the children that have been aforetime consecrated here in holy baptism, may come up in remembrance before thee. Specially bless them, we beseech of thee. And yet, bless not them alone. How many are the little wanderers that have no faithful parents. Oh! look upon the children everywhere, and bless them. Turn the hearts of the fathers unto their children, that they may be faithful to them. Grant that there may be none in this congregation who shall be seeking to find their way up to manhood, and shall find their path darkened by the shadow of their parents. Oh! that little children may be so illumined by Christ shining upon them, that they shall cast their reflected light backward upon their little ones, and show them the way, and make it plain and easy.

O Lord, we beseech of thee that there may be none on whose consciences and hearts shall lie, in the last day, the guilt of their children's destruction, to whom thou hast committed these unspeakable treasures; to whom thou hast given the privilege of holding in their arms Christ's little ones. Oh! grant that they may not be thrown away and wrecked by their parents. Give faith, give light, give love and purity and truth, to the parents, that they may impart them to their children.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the labors of thy servants in their households. May they be able to make them Christian households indeed. Oh! dear Savior, dwell with them, to make everything light, and everything easy, and everything beautiful, and everything pure and true. We beseech of thee that thou wilt fulfill thy promises to thy servants in their own hearts, and in their own households. Come to them. Abide with them evermore.

And bless those that labor in our Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, and those that go forth to other schools, and seek to save the outcast and wandering. Grant that the presence of Christ may be with them. May they walk as in a white cloud, the grace of God shining out of it to those to whom they come.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those that are growing up. We thank thee that so many are rising to fill the places of those that have gone before; that there are so many young men and young women who are being adorned with the unspeakably precious pearls and jewels of Christian grace. Grant, we pray thee, that they may walk in and out before men in the covenant of love, faithful, laborious, bearing their burdens, and performing the duty of the day as it is allotted to them in thy providence.

And be present with those who are now bearing the burden and heat of the day. Make them strong to stand up as pillars built on thee. And may they be able to be built upon, strengthened with all strength in God.

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

And we pray that thou wilt be with those who are passing from the stage; whose heads are whitened; who are seeing their last years, if not their last days. May they be able to grow mellow and rich as their end approaches. May they be able to carry about them, in their later life, the glory and beauty of a true faith.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon this Church, and all its labors of every kind; and upon all the Churches of this city and the great city adjoining. Purify thy Churches. Purify the community. Unite thy Christianservants in confidence and labors of love. And grant that in all the earth there may be, in thy Church universal, inspired a holier faith and zeal than ever existed before. And as iniquity and doubt and unbelief come in like a flood, oh Lord God! raise up again the banners of faith, and again call forth thy people with a new resurrection, and lead thine armed hosts to victory.

We commend ourselves to thee through all our lives, praying that thou wilt take care of us on the Sabbath, and on the week-day, and in the sanctuary and at home, and on the sea, and everywhere. And when we walk in the wilderness of the valley of the shadow of death, may we fear no evil. May thy rod and thy staff comfort us. And all the way may we find the signs and tokens of thy presence. And rejoicing may we march into the heavenly land, where we will praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word and the truth; and may we have ministered to us the act of accepting and appropriating to our special need, both the food and the medicine of thy truth. By thy Spirit wilt thou guide us into all truth; and by thy providence wilt thou discipline us. And may thy Spirit work through thy providence, that all things may work together for our good. May we not count those things good which only give pleasure. May we know that good lies in pain, in suffering, in patience, in self-denial. May we follow the steps of Him who sweat drops of blood. May we follow the Christ who bore his cross, and could bear it, to the end, enduring that we might be saved. And at last, when we have passed through the discipline of this lower school, bring us into the liberty of the upper and boundless realm, where we will praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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